

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

AID-20 EB-11 COME-00 AGR-20 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SIL-01

RSR-01 /146 W

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R 242045Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6378

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IN

SUBJECT: POLITICAL COMMENTS BY MRS. GANDHI IN INDEPENDENCE

DAY INTERVIEW

REF: NEW DELHI 9828

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN HER INDEPENDENCE DAY INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN THE NATIONAL HERALD AND THE CONGRESS PARTY PUBLICATION SOCIALIST INDIA, MRS. GANDHI NOT ONLY CRITICIZED OPPOSITION TACTICS DURING THE CURRENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES BUT ALSO CONGRESS PARTY WORKERS FOR THEIR LACK OF SUPPORT. SHE ALSO REITERATED HER WORRY THAT SUPER-POWER DETENTE MIGHT LEAD TO SPHERES-OF-INFLUENCE, MAKING INDIRECT REFERENCE TO THE US. END SUMMARY.

1. THE OPPOSITION TACTICS, SHE CHARGED, HAVE BEEN COUNTER-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRODUCTIVE. SHE CITED HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CANVASSING TO URGE FAMERS

AND TRADERS TO WITHHOLD THEIR GRAIN, STRIKES WHICH AFFECTED COMMUNICATIONS, AND INTIMIDATION OF SMALL (BUT NOT LARGE) TRADERS TO FORCE THEM TO SELL AT LOWER PRICES.

2. SHE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT SHE IS NOT THE CONGRESS PARTY AND CANNOT DO THE JOB OF THE CONGRESS WORKERS. THE PARTY IS MADE UP OF INDIVIDUALS. IN CRISIS, THE WORST IN THEM COMES TO THE FORE, WITH EACH THINKING "HE CAN TAKE SOME ADVANTAGE". SHE PLEADED FOR GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN PARTY PROGRAMS. THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE HAD BEEN DIFFERENT. THEN THERE WAS NO OTHER CHOICE. "BUT NOW PEOPLE HAVE GLIMPSED AN EASIER LIFE AND THEY WANT TO GRAB AT IT RATHER THAN STRUGGLE WITH THE VARIOUS SMALL PROGRAMS WHICH ALONE CAN STRENGTHEN THE FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER FUTURE". PEOPLE TEND TO BE UNWILLING TO BRANCH OUT INTO ANYTHING NEW "BECAUSE OF CENTURIES OF POVERTY AND INSECURITY WHICH MAKE ONE YEARN FOR SECURITY FIRST." SHE SPOKE OF THE NEED FOR A CHANGE IN THE ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY, EMPHASIZING THAT THE WILL AND FORCE FOR CHANGE HAD TO COME FROM BELOW AND WOULD NOT BE IMPOSED FROM ABOVE. SHE REFERRED RATHER ADMIRINGLY TO THE CHINESE EXPERIENCE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME EXPRESSING SKEPTICISM THAT WHAT CHINA HAS ACHIEVED WILL LAST.

3. MRS. GANDHI EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT SHE HAD HALTED THE SPREAD OF FACTIONALISM WITHIN STATE GOVERNMENTS BUT SAID THE MAIN PROBLEM WAS THAT WHILE ONE COULD WIN AN ELECTION, "YOU CAN'T CHANGE PEOPLE OVERNIGHT".

4. MRS. GANDHI STOOD BY HER PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT DETENTE MIGHT LEAD TO SPHERES OF INFLUENCE. "IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT ALL SUPER POWERS HAVE THE SAME ATTITUDE. ONLY SOME HAVE. BUT THE GENERAL SITUATION BROADLY REMAINS... I WAS MOSTLY CONCERNED ABOUT CERTAIN SUPER POWERS TRYING TO CARVE OUT SPHERES OF INFLUENCE OR TO ENCOURAGE CERTAIN STATES AGAINST OTHERS. AS FOR INSTANCE, PAKISTAN HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED IN THE PAST -- AND PERHAPS STILL IS -- IN AN UNFRIENDLY POSTURE TOWARDS US."

5. COMMENT: AS NOTED IN REFTTEL, MRS. GANDHI SOUNDS FRUSTRATED, TIRED, AND RESIGNED TO THE FACT (A) THAT CHANGES IN INDIA ARE GOING TO COME VERY SLOWLY IF THEY COME AT ALL, AND (B) THE PROBLEM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LIES MAINLY IN ATTITUDES AND WORKING STYLES OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE. WE AGREE WITH BOTH JUDGMENTS. MOYNIHAN

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